

TOP GIRLS - CARYL CHURCHILL

Life:

- ❖ **Caryl Churchill** was born in **London, England** on **3 September, 1938**.
- ❖ She was born to **Robert Churchill**, a cartoonist, and his wife **Jan**, a fashion model and actress.
- ❖ She was born during the reign of **George VI**, just before **World War II**.
- ❖ She attended **Trafalgar School for Girls** in **Montreal, Canada**, where her family moved in **1948**.
- ❖ She studied **English Literature** at **Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford**, earning a **BA** in **1960**.
- ❖ She married **David Harter**, a barrister, in **1961**, and they have three sons: **Joe, Paul, and Rick**.
- ❖ She began writing plays while at Oxford and continued after becoming a mother, initially for **radio**.
- ❖ She lives in **London** and remains active in theatre.

Career:

- ❖ Churchill is a playwright, a leading figure in **contemporary British theatre** and **feminist drama**.
- ❖ She is known as **Caryl Churchill**.
- ❖ She is celebrated as a '**theatrical innovator**' and **master of form**.
- ❖ She is described as a '**political dramatist**' and **feminist voice**.
- ❖ She was associated with **Joint Stock Theatre Company** and **Royal Court Theatre**, collaborating with directors like **Max Stafford-Clark**.
- ❖ Her works are known for their **experimental structure, non-linear time, gender fluidity**, and critique of **capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy**.
- ❖ She influenced playwrights like **Sarah Kane, Timberlake Wertenbaker, and Suzan-Lori Parks**.
- ❖ Her first professional production, **Owners**, premiered in **1972** at the **Royal Court Theatre Upstairs**.
- ❖ Her plays are frequently staged worldwide and studied in **drama curricula**.

Works:

Plays:

❖ **Owners (1972):**

- It explores **property, gender, and power dynamics** in a capitalist society.
- It was her first full-length play to be professionally produced.

❖ **Light Shining in Buckinghamshire (1976):**

- A **Joint Stock** collaboration, it dramatizes the **English Civil War** and **Ranters** through a large ensemble.
- It uses **non-linear structure** and **collective creation**.

❖ **Cloud Nine (1979):**

- Its full title is '**Cloud 9**'.
- A **two-act play** exploring **colonialism, sexuality, and gender roles**.
- Act I is set in **Victorian Africa**, Act II in **1970s London**, with actors switching **gender and race**.
- It won the **Obie Award** for Best Play in **1982**.

❖ **Top Girls (1982):**

- It opens with a surreal dinner party of historical women (e.g., **Pope Joan, Isabella Bird**).
- It critiques **Thatcherism, feminism, and class**.
- It won the **Obie Award** and is a **feminist theatre classic**.

❖ **Serious Money (1987):**

- A **verse play** satirizing **1980s financial speculation** and the **Big Bang** deregulation.
- It was a **Royal Court** and **West End** hit, winning the **Evening Standard Award**.

❖ **The Skriker (1994):**

- A **mythological fantasy** blending **folklore, environmental decay, and mental illness**.
- It features a shape-shifting **Skriker** and fragmented language.

❖ **Far Away (2000):**

- A **short dystopian play** in three parts, escalating from domestic unease to global war.
- It critiques **totalitarianism** and **normalization of violence**.

❖ **A Number (2002):**

- A **two-hander** exploring **cloning, identity, and father-son relationships**.
- It premiered with **Michael Gambon** and **Daniel Craig**.

❖ **Love and Information (2012):**

- A **fragmented play** of over **50 short scenes**, exploring **knowledge, memory, and connection** in the digital age.
- It has no fixed cast size or order.

Radio Plays:

❖ **The Ants (1962):**

- Her first produced work, broadcast on **BBC Radio**.

❖ **Identical Twins (1968):**

- An early exploration of **identity** and **duality**.

Awards:

- ❖ Obie Award for Best Play (1982): For 'Cloud Nine'.
- ❖ Obie Award for Playwriting (1983): For 'Top Girls'.
- ❖ Evening Standard Award for Best Comedy (1987): For 'Serious Money'.
- ❖ Laurence Olivier Award for Best New Play (1988): For 'Serious Money'.
- ❖ Susan Smith Blackburn Prize (1984, 1987): For 'Fen' and 'Serious Money'.
- ❖ Writers' Guild Award (multiple): For radio and stage works.

Quotes:

- ❖ **Max Stafford-Clark** said: "**Caryl's plays are like jazz – structured improvisation, full of surprise**".
- ❖ **Critic Michael Billington** noted: "**Churchill reinvented political theatre for the modern age**".
- ❖ **Suzan-Lori Parks** praised: "**She breaks form to tell truth – fearless and precise**".
- ❖ **Elaine Aston** remarked: "**Churchill's feminism is theatrical revolution – gender, time, power, all fluid**".
- ❖ **Lyn Gardner** called her: "**The most daring playwright of our time, always one step ahead**".

TOP GIRLS

Key Facts

- ❖ **Full Title:** *Top Girls*
- ❖ **Playwright:** Caryl Churchill
- ❖ **Year:** 1982
- ❖ **When Written:** Early 1980s
- ❖ **Where Written:** London, England
- ❖ **Literary Period:** Contemporary / Postmodern Feminist Drama
- ❖ **Genre:**
 - Drama
 - Feminist theatre
 - Non-linear / experimental structure
- ❖ Premiered at the **Royal Court Theatre**, London
- ❖ **Date:** 28 August 1982
- ❖ **Director:** Max Stafford-Clark, the Royal Court's artistic director
- ❖ *Top Girls* is a **1982 play** by **Caryl Churchill**.
- ❖ It centres on **Marlene**, a career-driven woman committed to women's advancement in the business world.
- ❖ The play examines:
 - The **roles available to women** in traditional and modern society
 - **What it takes for a woman to succeed** in a competitive, patriarchal world
 - The **cost of ambition**
 - The impact of **Thatcherite politics** on feminism
- ❖ Churchill explores how success for women often demands emotional sacrifice, moral compromise, and personal loss.

Characters List

- ❖ **Marlene** – The ambitious, arrogant new managing executive at “Top Girls” Employment Agency who prioritizes career success over family.
- ❖ **Joyce** – Marlene's dutiful yet pessimistic sister who feels burdened by life and resentful of Marlene's abandonment.
- ❖ **Angie** – A rebellious and immature 16-year-old who idolizes Marlene and resents Joyce.
- ❖ **Kit** – Angie's intelligent but quarrelsome 12-year-old friend who can hold her own against Angie's teasing.

- ❖ **Win** – An erratic, self-serving employee at “Top Girls” known for intelligence and manipulative tendencies.
- ❖ **Nell** – A sharp, ambitious, and highly competitive employee at the agency.
- ❖ **Mrs. Kidd** – Howard’s traditional and loyal wife who pleads with Marlene to give up the promotion.
- ❖ **Gret** – A fierce, daring woman from Bruegel’s *Dulle Griet* painting who leads women to storm Hell with domestic weapons.
- ❖ **Griselda** – Walter’s extremely obedient and patient wife from Chaucer’s “Clerk’s Tale.”
- ❖ **Howard** – The depressed coworker who loses the managerial job to Marlene.
- ❖ **Isabella (Isabella Bird)** – A 19th-century traveler who journeys worldwide to escape grief.
- ❖ **Jeanine** – A responsible young secretary seeking a better-paying job for her upcoming marriage.
- ❖ **Joan (Pope Joan)** – A woman who disguises herself as a man, becomes pope, and is later stoned when discovered.
- ❖ **Louise** – A long-serving employee who wants recognition and promotion but is repeatedly overlooked.
- ❖ **Nijo** – A submissive 13th-century Japanese courtesan who later becomes a Buddhist nun.
- ❖ **Shona** – A dishonest young girl who lies about her age and experience to get a job.
- ❖ **Walter** – The prince-husband of Griselda who cruelly tests her obedience and loyalty.

DETAILED SUMMARY

Act 1, Scene 1

- ❖ The play opens on a **Saturday night** in London.
- ❖ **Marlene** celebrates her promotion to **Managing Director** of the “Top Girls Employment Agency.”
- ❖ She hosts a dinner party in a restaurant.
- ❖ The guests are **five historical / legendary women** from different cultures and centuries:

Isabella Bird, Lady Nijo, Dull Gret, Pope Joan, and Patient Griselda.

- ❖ As each woman arrives, they begin narrating their life stories.

- ❖ Their conversations continuously **overlap, interrupt, and interweave** – a signature of Caryl Churchill’s postmodern style.
- ❖ They eat multiple courses, drink Frascati wine, and the tone shifts from polite to emotional and chaotic.
- ❖ The scene creates a “kaleidoscopic collage” of women’s struggles across time.

Isabella Bird:

- ❖ A real 19th-century English traveler and writer.
- ❖ Daughter of a clergyman; raised in Scotland; studied reading, Latin, poetry, and needlework.
- ❖ Had a **spinal tumor** removed; spent years lying on a sofa.
- ❖ At age 40, she travelled to Australia to improve her health but disliked it.
- ❖ Then visited the **Sandwich Isles (Hawaii)**; loved the sea and felt joyful.
- ❖ Met **Rocky Mountain Jim**, who proposed; she refused because he was unsuitable.
- ❖ Jim died from a gunshot, and on that day she had a **vision of him**.
- ❖ The two great loves of her life:
 - Her younger sister **Hennie**,
 - Her husband **Dr. Bishop**, who cared for Hennie until she died.
- ❖ After Dr. Bishop’s death, Isabella travelled to **Tibet** at age 56, crossing dangerous mountain passes despite spinal pain.
- ❖ Also travelled to **China**, where she narrowly escaped a hostile mob.
- ❖ Back in England, she felt **guilty** for travelling so freely, so she lectured people about the “corrupt East.”
- ❖ Doctors later refused to let her travel again, but she still visited **Morocco** at age 70 and became the only European woman to meet the Emperor.

Lady Nijo:

- ❖ A 13th-century Japanese courtesan and later a Buddhist nun.
- ❖ Became a concubine to the Emperor at age **14**, as ordered by her father.
- ❖ Raised to please the court and trained in courtly arts.
- ❖ Her father gave her a final instruction:
 - Serve the Emperor.
 - If she lost his favor, she must become a nun.
- ❖ She became attached to the Emperor, treasured her luxurious clothing, and accepted her role.

- ❖ Had affairs with several men (Ariake, Akebono), and the Emperor knew but didn't care – indicating she had lost his interest.
- ❖ Had four children by different men; none stayed with her.
 - First child (Emperor's) died.
 - Her second child (by Akebono) was secretly given away.
 - Her third and fourth were fathered by Ariake.
- ❖ Nijo becomes emotional when Griselda speaks of losing and regaining children.
- ❖ She recalls being excluded from the palace when the Emperor died and wonders whether she could have worn full mourning.
- ❖ Shares a story of rebellion:
 - At the Full Moon Ceremony, she and Lady Genki **beat the Emperor** to stop the tradition of women being beaten to produce sons.
 - The nobles were horrified, but Nijo feels proud.

Dull Gret:

- ❖ A figure from Brueghel's painting *Dulle Griet* ("Mad Meg").
- ❖ Speaks very little; has coarse manners; steals utensils.
- ❖ Her main story comes near the end:
 - She led an **army of women into hell**.
 - The women had already faced worse horrors in real life (rape, murder, war).
 - Gret's son was killed brutally; another baby was speared.
- ❖ One day Gret rallied the women in her village.
- ❖ They marched together, found a huge mouth leading into hell, and stormed in.
- ❖ They fought devils fiercely and "beat the bastards."
- ❖ Her story symbolizes **female rage and resistance**.

Pope Joan:

- ❖ A legendary female Pope who disguised herself as a man in the Middle Ages.
- ❖ A brilliant child who loved theology and philosophy.
- ❖ Ran away at age **12** dressed as a boy to study in Athens because women were forbidden.
- ❖ Travelled and studied after her companion died.
- ❖ In Rome, she became a teacher, then a Cardinal, and eventually **Pope** after Pope Leo died.
- ❖ Says God knew she was a woman – so he never spoke to her.
- ❖ Took a lover among her chamberlains.

- ❖ Became pregnant without realizing she was pregnant.
- ❖ During a procession on Rogation Day, she went into labor;
 - The baby fell onto the road;
 - A cardinal screamed “ Antichrist!”
- ❖ Joan was pulled outside the city and **stoned to death**.
- ❖ After her death, Popes had to sit on a **chair with a hole** so their sex could be inspected.
- ❖ She drinks heavily during the dinner.
- ❖ Ends the scene reciting a Latin passage from Lucretius about living above the chaos of the world – then vomits.

Patient Griselda:

- ❖ A figure from Chaucer’s *Clerk’s Tale* and other medieval legends.
- ❖ Known for her **extreme obedience** to her husband, the Marquis Walter.
- ❖ Married him at age **15** on the condition that she obey every command.
- ❖ Walter “tested” her devotion repeatedly:
 - Took away her newborn daughter at six weeks.
 - Took away her son at age two.
- ❖ Told her the villagers hated her and demanded the children be removed.
- ❖ After 12 years, Walter sent her back to her village claiming he needed a new bride for an heir.
- ❖ Later forced her to return and prepare for his wedding.
- ❖ Griselda discovered that the bride and the page were actually her own children.
- ❖ The women at the table are horrified by her submission, but Griselda calmly says, “It would have been nicer if Walter hadn’t had to test me.”

ACT 1, SCENE 2

Setting

- ❖ The scene shifts to the **Top Girls Employment Agency** on a weekday.
- ❖ Marlene is at work, interviewing a young woman named **Jeanine**.

Jeanine’s Background

- ❖ Jeanine is **20 years old**.
- ❖ She has completed some **coursework**, but her marks are only **average**.
- ❖ She currently works as a **secretary**, having started as a **typist**.
- ❖ All her bosses are **men**, and she has **no chance of promotion**.
- ❖ She wants a **better job** and hopes to earn **more money**.

Jeanine's Goals

- ❖ Jeanine wants to **save money to get married**.
- ❖ Marlene immediately asks whether Jeanine really wants a **career**.
- ❖ Jeanine replies she might want one, and she does **not want children** soon.
- ❖ Marlene warns her **not to tell employers** about her marriage plans or any future pregnancy plans.
 - She explains that employers reject young women if they think they will marry or have children soon.

Job Preferences

- ❖ Marlene asks if Jeanine has a **specific field** in mind.
- ❖ Jeanine says she would like to work in **advertising**.
- ❖ Marlene replies that advertising firms want applicants who are "**glossier**" (more polished and experienced).
- ❖ Jeanine wonders if she should **dress differently**, but Marlene says **clothes aren't the issue** – it is her **lack of experience**.

Alternative Job Options

- ❖ Marlene proposes two other openings:
- ❖ A company that makes **knitwear**.
- ❖ A company that makes **lampshades**.
- ❖ Both positions pay slightly more and have **possibilities for promotion**.
- ❖ Jeanine seems **uncertain** about these choices.

Jeanine's Wish to Travel

- ❖ Jeanine mentions that she wants a job that will allow her to **travel** occasionally.
- ❖ Marlene says there is a **prestigious job** as personal assistant to an executive in a **multinational corporation**, but Jeanine would need **more experience** – something she could aim for in **10 years**.
- ❖ Jeanine says, half-jokingly, that she might **not be alive** in 10 years.
- ❖ Marlene dismisses this and tells her she does not have the required **typing speed** anyway for such a high-level post.

Final Instructions from Marlene

- ❖ Marlene decides to send Jeanine to the **knitwear** and **lampshade** companies for interviews.

- ❖ She instructs Jeanine to:
 - **Be confident,**
 - **Present herself properly,**
 - Because her performance will reflect on **Marlene** and the agency.

ACT 1, SCENE 3

Setting

- ❖ The scene takes place in **Joyce's backyard.**
- ❖ Upstage: Joyce's house and back door.
- ❖ Downstage: **Angie** and **Kit** hiding inside a small shelter made of junk.

Angie and Kit Hide in the Shelter

- ❖ Joyce calls out to Angie (who appears to be her daughter), but the girls keep quiet.
- ❖ After Joyce goes inside, Angie tells Kit that she **wishes Joyce were dead.**
- ❖ Kit asks Angie if she wants to watch an X-rated movie, *The Exterminator*.
- ❖ Angie worries she has no money and that Joyce will refuse permission.
- ❖ Kit offers to pay with her **birthday money.**
- ❖ Joyce calls again; the girls ignore her.

The Girls' Strange, Childish, and Violent Talk

- ❖ Angie pretends she has **special powers**, saying she can make pictures fall off walls by thinking.
- ❖ She also claims she hears a **dead kitten** calling at night.
- ❖ Kit does not believe her; Angie calls her a **baby.**
- ❖ They begin teasing and cursing each other.
- ❖ Angie says she will **kill Joyce** and make Kit watch because Kit is scared of blood.
- ❖ To prove she is not scared, Kit pricks her finger.
- ❖ Angie **licks Kit's blood**, calling herself a "cannibal."
- ❖ The girls continue insulting each other; Kit tells Angie that her mother doesn't like her.
- ❖ Angie retaliates by calling Kit's mother a **slag.**

Joyce Overhears Them

- ❖ Joyce comes outside and listens to their argument.
- ❖ Calmly, she invites them in for **biscuits and tea.**

- ❖ The girls do not respond.
- ❖ Joyce suddenly loses patience and shouts: “Fucking rotten little cunt. You can stay there and die.” She goes back inside.
- ❖ The girls stay in the shelter.

Talk About War and Their Futures

- ❖ Kit tells Angie she worries about **war** and asks where the safest place would be.
- ❖ Angie says **New Zealand**.
- ❖ Kit repeats that her mother thinks Angie is a **bad influence** and too old for her.
- ❖ Angie becomes aggressive and **twists Kit’s arm**, forcing her to say humiliating things.
- ❖ Kit threatens to leave.

Angie Reveals a Secret

- ❖ To keep Kit with her, Angie shares a **serious secret**:
- ❖ She plans to **run away to London** to see her aunt **Marlene**.
- ❖ She says Joyce hates Marlene, but Angie admires her because “**she gets people jobs**.”
- ❖ Angie believes that **Marlene is actually her real mother**, and Joyce is only her aunt.

Joyce Returns; Conversation with Kit

- ❖ Joyce appears suddenly and sends **Kit home**.
- ❖ Kit tells Joyce the girls wanted to see a movie, but Joyce insists Angie must **clean her room first**.
- ❖ Angie goes inside.
- ❖ Joyce and Kit discuss Angie’s **future**:
 - Joyce fears Angie has **no prospects** because she dropped out of school.
 - Kit, who is intelligent, dreams of becoming a **nuclear physicist**.

Angie Comes Out in a Dress

- ❖ Angie returns wearing an old dress that is now too tight for her.
- ❖ Joyce mocks her and again says she cannot go to the film until her room is cleaned.
- ❖ Angie picks up a **brick** ominously.
- ❖ Kit suggests they leave.
- ❖ It begins to **rain**; Joyce and Kit run inside, but Angie stays outside.
- ❖ Kit runs back to her friend.

Ending Moment

- ❖ Angie says: **"I put on this dress to kill my mother."**
- ❖ Kit replies: **"I suppose you thought you'd do it with a brick."**
- ❖ This ending highlights Angie's unstable emotions, her violent fantasies, and her desire for escape.

ACT 2, SCENE 1

Setting & Opening - Win and Nell

- ❖ **Place & time** - Monday morning at **Top Girls Employment Agency**.
- ❖ **Win & Nell** drink coffee and **chat casually** about their weekends.
- ❖ **Win** says she slept with a **married man in West Sussex** who has a beautiful **rose garden**.
- ❖ His **wife was away** visiting her mother when the affair happened.
- ❖ They talk about **Howard**, who expected promotion **just because he is a man**.
- ❖ They comment that Howard is **bitter** about Marlene's promotion and may **leave the company**.
- ❖ They gossip about **male colleagues**, calling them mostly **incompetent**.
- ❖ **Nell's weekend** - slept with **two men**, then watched TV on Sunday.
- ❖ One man, **Derek**, proposed **marriage again**; Nell **refused**.
- ❖ They mention a **new woman client** who seems like a **"tough bird"**, similar to them and promising.

Marlene Arrives - Office Feminism & Rivalry

- ❖ **Marlene** arrives **late** to the office.
- ❖ **Win & Nell** clap and **congratulate** her on becoming **managing director**.
- ❖ They joke about **Howard's resentment**, ulcers, and say his **health will get worse**.
- ❖ **Nell** teases Win about having an affair with a **married man**, saying she'll **"tell the wife"**.
- ❖ Win says if the **wife finds out**, she will **end the affair immediately**.
- ❖ Nell jokes that Marlene will **run the whole agency** one day.
- ❖ Marlene asks if Nell **minds coming second**; Nell says she doesn't like it.
- ❖ Marlene replies, **"Who does?"** showing her competitive nature.
- ❖ Scene breaks with **Win & Nell** once again **applauding** Marlene's success.

Louise's Interview - Age, Loyalty & Sexism

- ❖ After the break, **Win** interviews **Louise**, aged **46**.
- ❖ Louise has worked at the **same job for 21 years** with a "respectable" salary.
- ❖ She now feels it is time to "**move on**" to a new post.
- ❖ Win silently notes that **Louise's age** may be a **problem** for employers.
- ❖ Win asks if there is any **office politics** behind her leaving; Louise says **no**.
- ❖ Louise says she has **no personal life** because of total **dedication** to the job.
- ❖ She has watched **younger men** pass her and get **promoted** repeatedly.
- ❖ Although she **trains** and **supports** them, she is **never seriously considered** for senior posts.
- ❖ Louise is now the **only woman** in her company.
- ❖ A younger woman colleague once left for a **competitor** and is now a **board member**.
- ❖ Louise feels this younger woman belongs to a **new type of confident, stylish career woman**.
- ❖ She describes herself as someone who has had to "**justify [her] existence every minute**" at work.
- ❖ Win says some firms may like **Louise's experience**, but most will **prefer younger men**.
- ❖ Win advises her to **talk less** in interviews and **keep answers shorter**.
- ❖ Win asks if she **drinks**; Louise says she drinks a little but is **not a teetotaler**, as total abstinence looks suspicious.

Angie Arrives - Aunt & Niece in the City

- ❖ After another break, the setting shifts to the **main office** where **Marlene** sits at her desk.
- ❖ **Angie** enters; Marlene at first treats her like an **unknown visitor** and asks if she has an **appointment**.
- ❖ Marlene then **recognizes** her as **her niece** and is surprised to see her.
- ❖ Angie says she has **quit school** and **run away** from home.
- ❖ She has come to London on a **one-way ticket** hoping to **stay with Marlene**.
- ❖ Angie asks Marlene about her **promotion** and **new office**.
- ❖ Marlene says she will move into a **better office** next week as a result of her promotion.
- ❖ Angie proudly says she always knew **Marlene would be "in charge of everything."**
- ❖ Angie asks if she can **see the new office** next week, clearly planning to **stay**.
- ❖ Marlene realizes Angie wants to **live with her for some time**.
- ❖ Marlene wonders whether **Joyce (Angie's mother)** knows she is in London.

- ❖ Angie becomes upset and says **not to worry about Joyce**, adding she won't **impose** if she is not wanted.
- ❖ Marlene **relents** and says **Angie can stay**. At this point, **Mrs. Kidd** arrives.

Mrs. Kidd vs Marlene - Gender & Guilt

- ❖ **Mrs. Kidd** is Howard's wife; Marlene first thinks she wants to **see Howard**.
- ❖ Mrs. Kidd says she has come to speak **directly to Marlene**.
- ❖ She claims **Howard is a nervous wreck** after losing the promotion to Marlene.
- ❖ She asks Marlene to **give up the promotion** so that **Howard** can have it instead.
- ❖ Mrs. Kidd argues that Howard has **worked longer** at the company and has a **family to support**.
- ❖ She implies that Marlene, being a **single career woman**, does not need it as much.
- ❖ Marlene replies that if Howard doesn't like it, he should **look for another job**.
- ❖ Mrs. Kidd accuses Marlene of being "**one of those ballbreakers**".
- ❖ She warns Marlene that she will end up "**miserable and lonely**."
- ❖ Marlene tells Mrs. Kidd to "**piss off**" and ends the conversation.
- ❖ Angie **watches** this entire confrontation and is **impressed** by Marlene's toughness.
- ❖ Angie decides to **stay in the office** rather than go sightseeing.
- ❖ Marlene allows her to sit at **Win's desk**.

Shona's Interview - Lies & Ambition

- ❖ Meanwhile, in another area, Nell interviews **Shona**.
- ❖ Shona claims to be **29 years old** and working in **sales** for four years.
- ❖ She says she makes **good money** and travels constantly for work.
- ❖ She wants a **change of job** and possibly a **higher title**.
- ❖ Nell says employers doubt women's ability to "**close deals**" because women are seen as **too considerate**.
- ❖ Shona insists she is "**not very nice**", is a **loner**, and likes **computers**.
- ❖ Nell lists some potential openings and suggests Shona might even **work for Top Girls**.
- ❖ Nell starts probing more deeply into Shona's **current job and lifestyle**.
- ❖ Shona tells a **far-fetched story** about driving a **Porsche**, travelling outside London, selling **dishwashers, fridges, washing machines**, and staying in **hotels** on expenses.
- ❖ Nell gradually realizes Shona is **lying**.
- ❖ Shona finally admits she is **only 21** and has **no job experience** at all.
- ❖ Nell, annoyed, calls the **interview a waste of time**.

Win's Past & Howard's Heart Attack

- ❖ Win returns to the main office and finds **Angie** sitting at her desk.
- ❖ Angie asks if Win has **always worked** at Top Girls.
- ❖ Win says she was **headhunted** from another job.
- ❖ Win praises Marlene as a **strong and capable boss**.
- ❖ Angie wonders if she could ever **work at Top Girls** but knows she has **no qualifications**.
- ❖ Win shares her own **life story** with Angie:
 - Has a **science degree**.
 - Once worked in **medical research**.
 - Quit, went to **California** and then **Mexico**.
 - Went "**bonkers**", moved back home, and saw a **psychiatrist**.
 - Got married in a "**moment of weakness**"; her husband has now been in **jail for four years**.
- ❖ During this long story, **Angie falls asleep** at the desk.
- ❖ **Nell** comes in and tells Win that **Howard has just had a heart attack** and been rushed to the **hospital**.
- ❖ **Marlene** re-enters and sees Angie **sleeping** in the office.
- ❖ Win tells Marlene that **Angie wants to work at Top Girls**.
- ❖ Marlene responds coldly: "**Packer in Tesco more like.**"
- ❖ Win says Angie seems **nice**, but Marlene calls her "**a bit thick... a bit funny.**"

ACT 2, SCENE 2

- ❖ Takes place **three years earlier**, on a **Sunday evening**, in **Joyce's kitchen**.
- ❖ **Marlene visits unexpectedly** after a long absence, carrying gifts in a bright bag.
- ❖ **Angie eats chocolates**, while Marlene gives her gifts—including the **dress Angie wears in Act 1**.
- ❖ Angie goes to try on the dress; meanwhile **Joyce scolds Marlene** for arriving without warning when the house is messy and there's no food.
- ❖ Marlene says **Angie phoned her two weeks earlier**, claiming Joyce wanted her to visit—Joyce reveals **Angie lied**.
- ❖ The sisters **argue about Marlene's absence** and her lack of awareness of Angie's behaviour.
- ❖ Angie returns in the dress; Joyce tells her to remove it but then **lets her wear it**.
- ❖ **Kit enters suddenly** and invites Angie to play; Angie refuses.
- ❖ Joyce remarks that **Angie treats Kit like a younger sister** and is good with children.

- ❖ Marlene asks if Angie wants to work with children; Joyce replies that Angie **has not thought about the future** and is **not clever like Marlene**.
- ❖ Marlene takes out **whisky**, remembers the night their father died; Joyce refuses to drink initially.
- ❖ Marlene asks about their mother; Joyce visits her **every Thursday**.
- ❖ They talk about old neighbours; Angie recalls Marlene's **last visit when she turned nine**.
- ❖ Marlene asks about Angie's dad; Joyce says **Frank left three years ago**.
- ❖ Angie fetches a **postcard from the Grand Canyon** that Marlene once sent.
- ❖ Marlene plans to stay the night; Angie offers her bed but Joyce refuses and **sends Angie upstairs**.
- ❖ Angie insists on showing Marlene a **secret**, and Marlene goes upstairs to tuck her in.
- ❖ Back downstairs, Joyce asks about the secret; Marlene refuses to reveal it.
- ❖ Joyce knows it is Angie's **exercise book** used for a "secret society" with Kit.
- ❖ Joyce reveals Angie has been in the **remedial class for two years**.
- ❖ Marlene changes the topic to her visit to their mother earlier that day.
- ❖ Conversation becomes tense as Joyce accuses Marlene of **abandoning the family** by leaving their hometown.
- ❖ Joyce suddenly says: **"I don't know how you could leave your own child."**
- ❖ Marlene confesses that **Angie is her biological daughter**, not Joyce's.
- ❖ Joyce and Frank had taken Angie because they were childless and Marlene was **17 and pregnant**.
- ❖ Joyce miscarried once later, which she blames on **stress from raising Angie**.
- ❖ Marlene says she has had **two abortions since Angie** and never wanted a child.
- ❖ The sisters erupt into emotional argument; Joyce says Marlene might as well wait **six more years** to visit again.
- ❖ Marlene **starts crying**; Joyce apologizes and says she loves her.
- ❖ They talk about Joyce's estranged husband Frank, who **never liked Angie**.
- ❖ Marlene says many men want a successful woman but can't handle the relationship.
- ❖ Marlene praises **Margaret Thatcher**, calling her a "tough lady", and admits she **voted Conservative**.
- ❖ Joyce is shocked; Marlene defends her choice: **"Monetarism is not stupid."**
- ❖ They argue about **class**:
 - Marlene hates the working class for being "stupid and lazy".
 - Joyce scratches posh cars because she hates the rich.

- ❖ Marlene supports **Ronald Reagan**, while Joyce believes a **working-class revolt** is coming.
- ❖ Marlene says success is about **ability, not class**, but she “can’t help people who are stupid, lazy, and frightened.”
- ❖ Joyce bitterly says these words describe **Angie**, and fears for the girl's future under Thatcher.
- ❖ Their brief emotional connection collapses back into **political conflict**.
- ❖ Marlene tries to ask Joyce something before sleeping, but Joyce **refuses to listen and walks out**.
- ❖ Marlene pours another drink.
- ❖ **Angie enters, half-asleep**, calls “Mum,” then sees Marlene and whispers “**Frightening.**”
- ❖ Marlene asks about a bad dream; Angie repeats “**Frightening.**”
- ❖ The scene – and the entire play – **ends with Angie’s ominous word**.